

A Report to the 34th District



**Representative
Eileen Cody**



**Representative
Joe McDermott**

Fall 2003

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Dear Neighbors,

We hope you have enjoyed our long and warm summer. As we write this, Fall is in the air and school is once again underway. It seems like a good time to report to you on the past legislative session and begin thinking about the new session that will begin in January.

This was an extraordinary year for our state. When the Legislature convened in January facing a nearly \$2.7 billion budget deficit, few people dared to hope for significant progress on critical issues facing Washington.

But we stayed focused on problem-solving rather than partisan politics, and are happy to report we achieved solid results on many issues important to the 34th District:

- After years of fighting special interests, we were able to pass a strong plan to reduce the costs of prescription drugs.
- We passed an historic 10-year investment plan to improve transportation in our state.
- We were able to save passenger-only ferry service to Vashon Island.
- We passed a strong package of incentives to encourage Boeing to build the 7E7 in Washington.

You'll see more about these accomplishments inside. On other issues, there have been disappointments. The Legislature's budget is a step backwards from many of our goals including improving long-term care, education, and health care for all, and there are clearly more challenges ahead.

We hope you'll take a look inside and that you'll remember we'd love to hear from you. Your ideas, suggestions and complaints help us to be more effective advocates for our community.

We're honored to be your representatives,

Eileen Cody

Joe McDermott

A Report to the 34th District

Representative **EILEEN CODY**

Prescription drugs

We've spent the past several years fighting the big pharmaceutical companies in Olympia, trying

to pass legislation to lower prescription drug prices. I've championed this legislation each year and am proud to say that this year, we finally won.

Thanks to the support of the Senate Health & Long-Term Care Committee Chair, Alex Deccio, and a broad coalition of consumer and medical groups, Washington state will at long last have lower prescription drug prices.

Passing Senate Bill 6088 was a highlight of the 2003 legislative session. By establishing a preferred drug list —



based on the best scientific evidence available — the state will be able to negotiate with drug companies to purchase these “preferred drugs” in bulk at a lower rate. These bulk discounts will save state taxpayers more than \$10 million each year.

Just as importantly, the state's bulk purchasing discounts will also be made available to over 590,000 low-income senior citizens and people with disabilities. Our ultimate goal is to enable everyone in Washington state to get prescription drugs at these lower, state-negotiated, rates.

The goal has always been to improve the quality of care, while making prescription drugs more affordable and more accessible. How will we do this?

We're going to turn it over to the experts, who will adopt a “preferred drug list” based on the best scientific evidence available, which will, as I mentioned, allow the state to buy those drugs in bulk. Individual physicians, however, will retain the ability to prescribe the drug they believe is best for their patient by marking their prescription ‘dispense as written.’ This will ensure that the right drug goes to the



***Eileen announces
Washington's new
prescription drug
reforms at a press
conference.***

right person at the right time – at the right cost.

The new law also creates a pharmacy connection program to inform people about manufacturer-sponsored prescription drug assistance programs that may be available to them. To learn more, you can visit the prescription drug reform web site at www.rx.wa.gov. A toll-free prescription drug help line will be up and running in a few weeks.

After several years of being thwarted by the opposition, we finally won.

Transportation

Washington's terrible transportation problems were finally addressed. With strong support



from both business and labor, lawmakers united behind a 10-year, \$4.2 billion transportation improvement plan that will make our highways safer, ease congestion, and help our economy.

The new plan targets billions of dollars toward congestion relief on I-509, I-5, I-405, SR 520, and other highways – including funding to begin work toward extending I-509 south to I-5. It also provides funding for critical safety upgrades, with \$177 million to launch repairs on the Alaskan Way Viaduct. There is also substantial funding for passenger and freight rail, ferries, paratransit, and other alternatives to driving alone.

Funding for the package comes mainly from a nickel increase in the gas tax, a 15 percent increase in truck weight fees, and a 0.3 percent sales tax on vehicles. To ensure transportation tax dollars are well spent, we also enacted the most stringent efficiency and accountability reforms in state history – including permit streamlining to reduce project costs and mandatory, ongoing performance audits of all transportation agencies.

Balancing the Budget

The nearly \$2.7 billion deficit that faced Washington earlier this year was among the



biggest in state history. There were no easy solutions. We voted for the original House Budget that honored the home health care workers contract and raised revenue. The Senate Republicans refused to consider any new taxes despite the damage done to the state. Ultimately we voted against the state budget because it failed to fund the home health care workers contract and will hurt public schools and other critical state priorities.

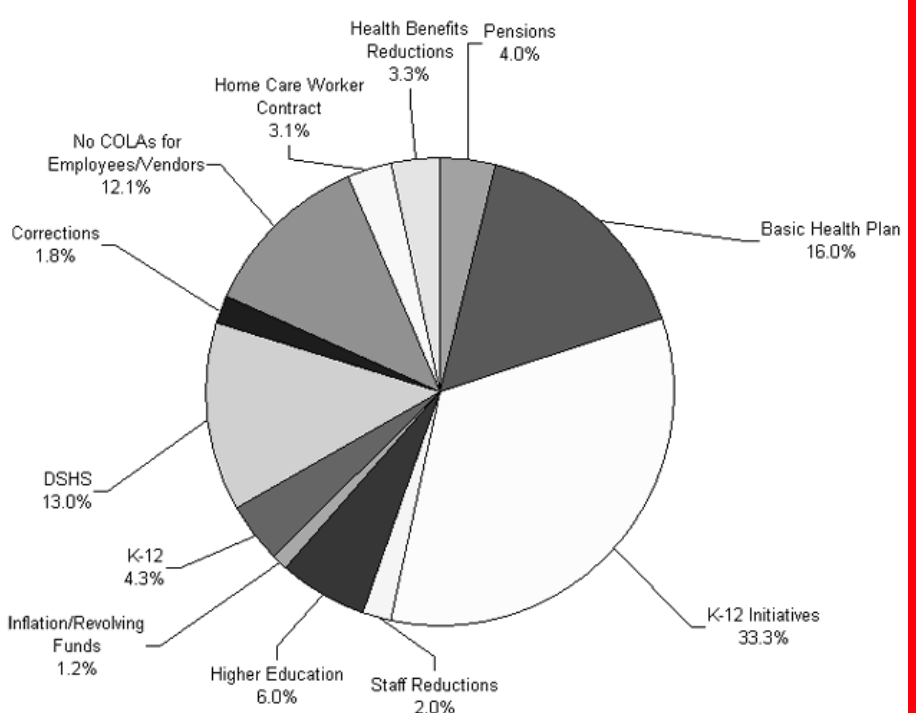
If we continue losing qualified home-care workers, more of our elderly and disabled will end up in nursing homes at far greater taxpayer costs. That's why the people passed Initiative 775.

The state negotiated a good faith agreement to honor I-775 by raising home care worker salaries to \$9.75 an hour and providing basic health benefits. It was wrong of the Legislature to abandon this agreement — and a public initiative — by providing only a 75 cent an hour raise and no benefits.

We were also troubled by a budget that hurts public schools. As the pie chart shows, schools will be severely impacted by the Legislature's budget – and these impacts will hit at the very time we are requiring students and teachers to achieve much higher academic standards. The children of Washington deserved better.

Some people supported the new budget because it did not require a tax increase. But that cannot be the only test we apply to public policy. A budget that harms schools, colleges, health care, and long term care for the elderly and disabled is inconsistent with our state's values and principles. We believe that is a more important test.

2003 BUDGET REDUCTIONS



Mercury

We co-sponsored the new state mercury law, the most important environmental legislation of



the year. This was a public health issue – food eaten from mercury-contaminated environments has been linked to IQ deficits, autism, and long-term damage to the brain, kidneys and central nervous system.

Our new law, which passed with strong bipartisan support, reduces mercury pollution at the source by: (1) Banning certain mercury products where safe and cost-effective alternatives are available – mainly novelties, thermometers, vehicle switches and thermostats; (2) Ending school uses of mercury; and (3) Launching a public education campaign, and requiring product labels, to encourage safe disposal of mercury.

For local information about proper disposal of mercury, please call the King County Hazards Line at 206-296-4692.

Dirty third-runway fill

We strongly opposed the "Toxic Fill Bill" that special interests rammed through the Legislature to



benefit the Port of Seattle. The law undermines Pollution Control Hearings Board rulings by weakening clean water standards — and arsenic testing — related to using nearly 20 million cubic tons of dirt as runway fill. Fourteen environmental organizations have joined an Airport Communities Coalition lawsuit challenging the new law. Passage of this legislation was a terrible event in a trying session.

Boeing

Winning the national competition to build the Boeing 7E7 would generate between



73,000 and 151,000 family-wage jobs in Washington over the next two decades. Gov. Locke and lawmakers from across the political spectrum worked on incentives this year to encourage Boeing to build the 7E7 here. We supported key elements of the priority legislation Boeing requested,

- The transportation package
- Higher education enhancements
- Building code changes
- Shoreline management adjustments (Boeing pier)
- \$3 billion tax incentive package

The estimated \$3 billion in total tax incentives will only be provided if Boeing builds the 7E7 in Washington. This sounds expensive, but not when you consider that final assembly of 7E7 in Washington would generate as much as \$540 million in added state revenues *each year*. Boeing and Boeing families are vital to our communities. We need them to be a vital part of our future as well.

The wrong unemployment reforms

In addition to other steps to improve the business climate for Boeing, we supported

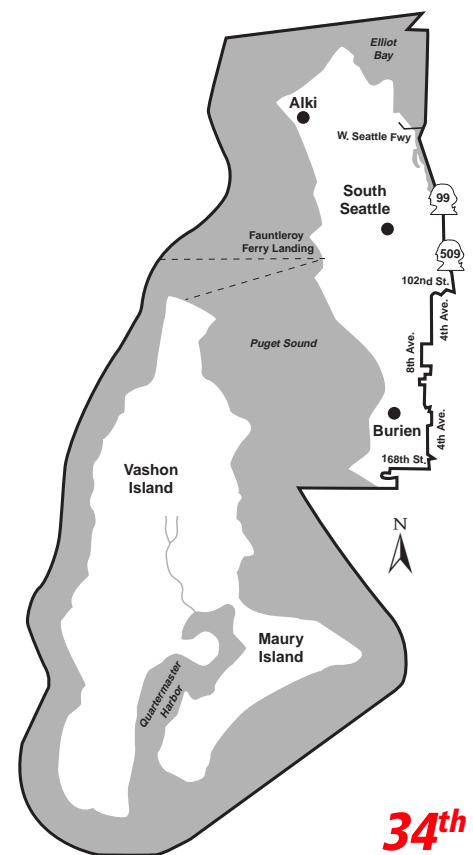


unemployment insurance reforms that would help Boeing and other businesses without dismantling worker rights. Unfortunately, instead of enacting reasonable reforms, the Legislature passed an extreme proposal that will hurt tens

of thousands of working families in their time of greatest need. The unemployment insurance changes:

- Slash benefits for more than 80% of unemployed workers by \$50 to \$200 *each week*.
- Reduce maximum eligibility in most circumstances from 30 weeks to 26 weeks
- Create a more fragile and risky system of financing unemployment insurance.
- Make it much harder for workers to appeal when benefits are denied.

We voted against these changes because they are wrong in themselves and better ways to achieve unemployment insurance reform were near to hand. Families whose breadwinners lose jobs through no fault of their own will pay a terrible price when this law takes effect next year.



34th
Legislative
District

A Report to the 34th District

Representative JOE McDERMOTT

Clean air legislation

Everyone has the right to breathe clean indoor air. That is why I am working with the American Cancer Society, American Lung Association, American Heart Association and many others to ban smoking in indoor public places.



We already ban smoking in office buildings. Everyone deserves a workplace free of these toxins. It is shocking to realize waitresses are over three times more likely to die from lung cancer, and 2.5 times more likely to die from heart disease, than women in other occupations.

Small businesses will not be hurt by a smoking ban. In fact, every reputable study from places that have a smoking ban proves that restaurant and bar revenues increase following indoor smoking bans. People are more, not less, likely to frequent smoke-free restaurants and bars.

Given this information, I introduced the Clean Indoor Air Bill, House Bill 1868, to

ban smoking in restaurants, bars, taverns, and bowling alleys. Working together with Eileen, who is Chair of the House Health Care Committee, the bill passed out of committee but failed to get a vote in the full House. I will continue this fight for clean indoor air.

Education reform

Helping Washington's children to have world-class public schools is my goal as Vice



Chair of the Education Committee. In addition to working for improved state funding for local schools, I'm also working on legislation to:

- **Improve the Learning Assistance Program** to enable more low-income children achieve Washington's high academic standards. We can achieve this by expanding the program to high school students and reforming learning assistance funding to target resources where they're most needed.
- **Improve academic standards** by making state graduation requirements focused and clear, and giving students who fall short of state academic standards additional opportunities to succeed and stay on track for graduation.

- **Help local school levy efforts** by allowing school levies to pass with a simple majority, as opposed to the current 60 percent requirement. It is wrong, and hurtful to schools, to require school levies to meet election standards we do not apply to other public votes.

Please remember that on education — and every other issue — I welcome your ideas and suggestions for legislation.



*Joe argues
for the Simple
Majority bill
on the floor
of the House.*

Vashon's Passenger Only (PO) Ferry Service Saved

When Washington State Ferries announced last December that passenger-only ferry service would be terminated on June 15th, we promised Vashon Island residents we would fight in the Legislature to save the popular service. We prevailed. PO boats are still afloat and funded.

It wasn't an easy battle. The Senate was reluctant to continue passenger-only service. But working closely with House Transportation Committee Chair, Rep. Ed Murray of Seattle, we convinced the House that ending PO service would be a major blow to the future of Vashon Island and would pour thousands of additional cars onto already overcrowded streets in West Seattle. We were successful in making our case that PO service is vital for Vashon and we ultimately prevailed.



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